

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of delivering media, the method comprising:
  - maintaining a record comprising user information associated with a user of a client system;
  - maintaining a plurality of media subscription levels;
  - associating the record with the corresponding media subscription level;
  - receiving a media request from the client system requesting a media selection;
  - determining whether the user qualifies to receive the media selection according to the media subscription level; and
  - delivering the media selection to the client system if the user qualifies to receive the media selection.
2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising offering the media subscription level to the user if the user does not qualify to receive the media selection.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the media selection is delivered to the client system via the Internet.
4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising maintaining a media player for the user for viewing the media selection.
5. The method of Claim 4, further comprising modifying the media player according to the subscription level.
6. The method of Claim 4, further controlling access by the user to features of the media player according to the media subscription level.
7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising enabling the user to select one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.
8. The method of Claim 7, further comprising enabling the user to alter the one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.
9. A computer system for delivering media, the computer system comprising:
  - a database module configured to store a record containing user information associated with a user of a client system and to store information corresponding to one of a plurality of media subscription levels for the record;

a communication module configured to receive a media request from the client system, and to deliver the media selection to the client system; and

a control module configured to determine whether the user qualifies to receive the media selection according to the one of the plurality of media subscription levels.

10. The computer system of Claim 9, wherein the control module is further configured to offer the media subscription level to the user if the user does not qualify to receive the media selection.

11. The computer system of Claim 9, wherein the control module is further configured to deliver the media selection to the client system via the Internet.

12. The computer system of Claim 9, further comprising a media player module configured to enable the user to view the media selection.

13. The computer system of Claim 12, wherein the media player module is further configured to present the media selection according to the subscription level.

14. The computer system of Claim 12, wherein the media player module is further configured to control access by the user to the features of the media player according to the media subscription level.

15. The computer system of Claim 9, wherein the control module is further configured to enable the user to select one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.

16. The computer system of Claim 15, wherein the control module is further configured to enable the user to select one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.

17. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions, which when executed by a computer processor perform the method comprising:

storing a record comprising user information associated with a user of a client system;

storing a plurality of media subscription levels;

associating the record with the corresponding media subscription level;

receiving a media request from the client system requesting a media selection;

determining whether the user qualifies to receive the media selection according to the media subscription level; and

delivering the media selection to the client system if the user qualifies to receive the media selection.

18. The method of Claim 17, further comprising offering the media subscription level to the user if the user does not qualify to receive the media selection.

19. The method of Claim 17, wherein the media selection is delivered to the client system via the Internet.

20. The method of Claim 17, further comprising maintaining a media player for the user for viewing the media selection.

21. The method of Claim 20, further comprising modifying the media player according to the subscription level.

22. The method of Claim 20, further comprising controlling access by the user to features of the media player according to the media subscription level.

23. The method of Claim 17, further comprising enabling the user to select one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.

24. The method of Claim 23, further comprising enabling the user to alter the one or more media offerings included in the subscription level.

25. A computer system for controlling access to a selected feature of a software application on a client computer, the computer system comprising:

a control module configured to launch the software application with a subset of available features enabled, wherein the subset does not include the selected feature; and

an interface module configured to prompt a user to sign in to a server that can be coupled to the client computer via a network, and enabling the selected feature in response to a successful sign in.

26. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the software application comprises a media player.

27. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the network is the Internet.

28. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the sign in also controls the user's access to media content that is selectively provided to the client computer on a subscription basis.

29. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the selected feature is a graphic equalizer.

30. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the selected feature is a screen selection mode that permits a user to vary a screen size for a multimedia presentation.

31. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the selected feature is an absence of or reduction in advertisements.

32. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the control module is further configured to receive an indication that the user has signed-off from the remote server, and to disable access to the selected feature in response to the sign off.

33. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the access to the software feature is controlled each time the software application is launched.

34. The computer system of Claim 25, wherein the control module is further configured to receive an indication from the server that is provided in response to the sign in, and to control the enabling of the selected feature in response to the indication, in order to enable the selected feature in response to a successful sign.

35. A method of controlling access to a selected feature of a software application on a client computer, the method comprising:

launching the software application with a subset of available features enabled, wherein the subset does not include the selected feature;

prompting a user to sign in to a server that is coupled to the client computer via a network; and

enabling the selected feature in response to a successful sign in.

36. The method of Claim 35, wherein the software application comprises a media player.

37. The method of Claim 35, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

38. The method of Claim 35, wherein the sign in also controls the user's access to media content that is selectively provided to the client computer on a subscription basis.

39. The method of Claim 38, wherein the selected feature is enabled for a sign in that is related to a first subscription that includes a plurality of media content providers, and the selected feature is disabled for a sign in that is related to a second subscription, where the second subscription includes at least one media content provider less than the plurality of media content providers.

40. The method of Claim 35, wherein the selected feature comprises a graphic equalizer.

41. The method of Claim 35, wherein the selected feature comprises a screen selection mode that permits a user to vary a screen size for a multimedia presentation.

42. The method of Claim 35, wherein the selected feature is an absence of or reduction in advertisements.

43. The method of Claim 35, further comprising:  
receiving an indication that the user has signed-off from the remote server;  
and  
disabling access to the selected feature in response to the sign off.

44. The method of Claim 35, wherein the access to the software feature is controlled each time the software application is launched.

45. The method of Claim 35, wherein enabling the selected feature in response to a successful sign in further comprises:

receiving an indication from the server that is provided in response to the sign in; and  
controlling the enabling of the selected feature in response to the indication.

46. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions, which when executed by a computer processor performs the method comprising:

launching a software application with a subset of available features enabled, wherein the subset the selected feature is disabled;  
prompting a user to sign in to a server via a network; and  
enabling the selected feature in response to a successful sign in.

47. The method of Claim 46, wherein the software application is a media player.

48. The method of Claim 46, wherein the network is the Internet.

49. The method of Claim 46, wherein the sign in also controls the user's access to media content that can be selectively provided to the client computer on a subscription basis.

50. The method of Claim 46, wherein the selected feature is a graphic equalizer.

51. The method of Claim 46, wherein the selected feature is a screen selection mode that permits a user to vary a screen size for a multimedia presentation.

52. The method of Claim 46, wherein the selected features is an absence of advertisements.

53. The method of Claim 46, further comprising:

receiving an indication that the user has signed-off from the remote server;  
and

disabling access to the selected feature in response to the sign off.

54. The method of Claim 46, wherein the access to the software feature is controlled each time the software application is launched.

55. The method of Claim 46, wherein the enabling of the selected feature in response to a successful sign in further comprises:

receiving an indication from the server that is provided in response to the sign in; and

controlling the enabling of the selected feature in response to the indication.

56. A computer system for providing a software package in multiple tiers, the computer system comprising:

a single executable program comprising multiple tiers of a software package;

a control module configured to permit a first tier of the software package to function, wherein the first tier includes fewer features than a second tier of the software package, to disable the second tier of the software package unless a condition is satisfied, and to enable the second tier of the software package when the condition is satisfied; and

a communication module configured to communicate with a remote server via a network if the first condition is satisfied.

57. The computer system of Claim 56, wherein the condition is a subscription to a service that requires a periodic payment.

58. A method of providing a software package in multiple tiers, the method comprising:

- providing multiple tiers of a software package in a single executable;
- permitting a first tier of the software package to function, wherein the first tier includes fewer features than a second tier of the software package;
- disabling the second tier of the software package unless a condition is satisfied;
- communicating with a remote server via a network to determine if the first condition is satisfied; and
- enabling the second tier of the software package when the condition is satisfied.

59. The method of Claim 58, wherein the condition is a subscription to a service that requires a periodic payment.

60. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions for providing a software package in multiple tiers, which when executed by a computer processing performs the method comprising:

- including multiple tiers of a software package in a single executable;
- permitting a first tier of the software package to function, wherein the first tier includes fewer features than a second tier of the software package;
- disabling the second tier of the software package unless a condition is satisfied;
- communicating with a remote server via a network to determine if the first condition is satisfied; and
- enabling the second tier of the software package when the condition is satisfied.

61. The method of Claim 60, wherein the condition is a subscription to a service that requires a periodic payment.

62. A computer system for controlling playback of media content, the computer system comprising:

a communication module configured to receive a request for subscription media content;

a control module configured to determine whether sign-in information has been provided to enable access to the subscription media content; and

an interface module configured to provide a sign-in process in response to an unsuccessful sign in to enable the access to the subscription media content, to retrieve the subscription media content in response to a successful sign in, and to initiate playback of the subscription media content in response to the successful sign in, without receiving another request for the subscription media content.

63. The system of Claim 62, wherein the request from the user is a selection of a hyperlink that corresponds to the subscription media content.

64. A method of controlling playback of media content, the method comprising:

receiving a request for subscription media content;

determining whether sign-in information has been provided that permits access to the subscription media content;

providing a sign-in process in response to an unsuccessful sign in such to enable access to the subscription media content;

automatically retrieving the subscription media content in response to a successful sign in; and

automatically initiating playback of the subscription media content in response to the successful sign in, without receiving another request for the subscription media content.

65. The method of Claim 64, wherein the request from the user is a selection of a hyperlink that corresponds to the subscription media content.

66. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions for controlling playback of media content, which when executed by a computer processor perform the method comprising:

receiving a request from a user for subscription media content;

determining whether the user has provided sign-in information that permits access to the subscription media content;



providing a sign-in process upon indication of an unsuccessful sign in to enable access to the subscription media content;

automatically retrieving the subscription media content in response to a successful sign in; and

automatically initiating playback of the subscription media content in response to the successful sign in, without receiving another request for the subscription media content.

67. The method of Claim 66, wherein the request from the user is a selection of a hyperlink that corresponds to the subscription media content.

68. A method of allocating subscription fees for media content, the method comprising:

providing a first fee to a media content provider in response to a first subscription from a first user, where the first subscription includes only a subscription to the media content provider, where the media content provider provides access to subscription-only content over a computer network; and

providing a second fee to the media content provider in response to a second subscription from a second user, where the second subscription includes a plurality of subscriptions to a plurality of media content providers that includes the media content provider, where the second fee is different from the first.

69. The method of Claim 68, wherein the second fee is higher than the first fee.

70. The method of Claim 68, wherein the computer network is the Internet.

71. The method of Claim 68, wherein the computer network transmits media content that is in a packet format.

72. The method of Claim 68, wherein the first fee and the second fee are provided to the media content provider electronically.

73. The method of Claim 68, wherein the media content provider provides a media content.

74. The method of Claim 73, wherein the media content comprises audio and video content.

75. The method of Claim 73, wherein the media content is streamed over the computer network.